

A background image showing a group of graduates in caps and gowns. In the foreground, a male graduate in a grey gown and cap is smiling on the left, and a male graduate in a maroon gown and cap is looking forward on the right. Other graduates are visible in the background, some in grey and some in maroon. The image is semi-transparent with a dark red overlay.

Lowell Public Schools

# End of Year Reflection SY20/21 Highlights and SY21/22 Opportunities

Superintendent Joel D. Boyd, Ed.D.



# AGENDA

- Review SY2020-2021 Goals
- Standard 1: Instructional Leadership
- Standard 2: Management and Operations
- Standard 3: Family and Community Engagement
- Standard 4: Professional Culture

<b>GOAL 1:</b> <b>Improve academics and student achievement at every school site</b>	<b>GOAL 2:</b> <b>Improve operational efficiency across the system</b>	<b>GOAL 3:</b> <b>Ensure that every school is safe and welcoming to every student and every family, every day</b>	<b>GOAL 4:</b> <b>Increase community engagement and empower families as partners in the educational process</b>
<b>School Quality Improvement Plans</b> Implement phase 2 of the School Quality Improvement Planning process that was initiated in March, including a protocol for an internal needs assessment at each school site and alignment of instructional priorities for SY21/22 with FY22 school-based budgets.	<b>Data-Driven Decision-Making</b> Establish Key Performance Indicators to monitor and track progress in each goal area of the District's strategic plan; Develop school-level performance scorecards to monitor progress and target support for school improvement; Develop and implement, semi-annual community satisfaction surveys as part of the systemic quality review process	<b>Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices</b> Develop a multi-year, cross disciplinary culturally and linguistically responsive implementation plan which includes common definitions, standards, benchmarks and training schedule for students, staff and families.	<b>Communication and Outreach to Families of Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds</b> Develop and implement measurement tools which capture baseline data on the outcomes of the family engagement and language access plans on family satisfaction.
<b>Targeted Support for Chronically Underperforming Schools</b> Implement focused coaching and increased centralized support for schools within the District's <i>Renaissance Network</i> through a professional learning community model, including the development and implementation of a virtual instructional rounds protocol to monitor, support and improve teaching and learning in the COVID-19 remote environment.	<b>Diversity Recruitment and Hiring</b> Increase the pool of diverse applicants to the Lowell Public Schools through the implementation of the <i>Diversifying Teacher Leaders</i> program, the locally-based, teacher recruitment and retention program which was developed in SY19/20 to increase the number of teachers of color in district schools and cultivate leadership opportunities for current diverse teaching staff	<b>Social Emotional Learning</b> Develop and Implement a comprehensive SEL curriculum and relevant professional learning across the district, including implementation of a needs assessment tool in grades K-12, the Second Step online curriculum within all middle schools, and the Open Circle curriculum in elementary schools with no existing SEL curriculum	<b>Site-based Budgeting</b> Implement phase 2 of site-based budgeting, including an expanded timeline for collaboration with school-site councils and greater alignment with site-based <i>Quality Improvement Plans</i>
<b>Digital Learning Plan</b> Develop a multi-year digital learning plan to leverage and enhance the 1:1 mobile device infrastructure necessitated by COVID to create meaningful 21 <sup>st</sup> century classrooms at each school beyond the current remote environment.	<b>Fair Student Funding</b> Implement phase 2 of the school-based funding migration from a personnel-based system to student-based to further increase equity and transparency in district-wide budgeting and school-based resource allocations, including increased capacity building within the district's finance office on the underlying algorithms to reduce reliance on external, 3 <sup>rd</sup> party support	<b>Facility Safety Audits</b> Implement proactive security readiness protocols at every school, including semi-annual, collaborative audits of each building; Monitor and refine the structure and conditions of all interior spaces according to DESE COVID-19 guidance and SC adopted protocols for each phase of re-opening	<b>Portrait of a Graduate</b> Develop and publish a community-vetted vision for Lowell graduates, including a framework of the knowledge, skills and competencies that will be attained through a K-12 Lowell Public Schools education based on the collaborative input and recommendations of students, staff and community partners
<b>Secondary School Reform</b> Initiate a multi-year plan to align secondary school programming with post-secondary opportunities in conjunction with the development of the community-based <i>Portrait of a Graduate</i> , including a redesign of the comprehensive secondary program, new alternative programs and additional city-wide magnet options.	<b>Transportation System Redesign</b> Conduct a comprehensive analysis of available options for improving general education bus services, including an implementation timeline which is consistent with relevant SC policies and prevailing contractual provisions.	<b>School Assignment Policy Analysis</b> Conduct a comprehensive analysis of current school demographics and the impact that neighborhood school assignment would have on racial, gender and socioeconomic balance within schools and its implications for funding.	<b>Lowell Student Advisory Council</b> Establish a student advisory council to elevate student voices in district-level decision-making; Implement training for all student members and coordinate monthly meetings related to district-level initiatives

<b>GOAL 1:</b> <b>Improve academics and student achievement at every school site</b>	<b>GOAL 2:</b> <b>Improve operational efficiency across the system</b>	<b>GOAL 3:</b> <b>Ensure that every school is safe and welcoming to every student and every family, every day</b>	<b>GOAL 4:</b> <b>Increase community engagement and empower families as partners in the educational process</b>
<b>School Quality Improvement Plans</b> Implement phase 2 of the School Quality Improvement Planning process that was initiated in March, including a protocol for an internal needs assessment at each school site and alignment of instruction SY21/22 with FY22 school-based budget	<b>Data-Driven Decision-Making</b> Establish Key Performance Indicators to monitor and track progress in each goal area of the District's strategic plan; Develop school-level performance	<b>Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices</b> Develop a multi-year, cross disciplinary culturally and linguistically responsive implementation plan which includes common definitions, standards, benchmarks and	<b>Communication and Outreach to Families of Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds</b> Develop and implement measurement tools which capture baseline data on the outcomes of the family engagement and plans on family satisfaction.
<b>Targeted Support for Chronically Underperforming Schools</b> Implement focused coaching and increase support for schools within the District's Network through a professional learning model, including the development and of a virtual instructional rounds protocol support and improve teaching and learning in COVID-19 remote environment.			<b>Targeted Support for Chronically Underperforming Schools</b> Implement phase 2 of site-based budgeting, including an increase in support for collaboration with school-site councils and alignment with site-based Quality Improvement
<b>Digital Learning Plan</b> Develop a multi-year digital learning plan and enhance the 1:1 mobile device necessitated by COVID to create 21st century classrooms at each school beyond the remote environment.			<b>Digital Learning Plan</b> Establish a community-vetted vision for Lowell and develop a framework of the knowledge, skills and outcomes that will be attained through a K-12 Lowell education based on the collaborative input and feedback of students, staff and community partners
<b>Secondary School Reform</b> Initiate a multi-year plan to align secondary school programming with post-secondary opportunities in conjunction with the development of the community-based <i>Portrait of a Graduate</i> , including a redesign of the comprehensive secondary program, new alternative programs and additional city-wide magnet options.	<b>Transportation System Redesign</b> Conduct a comprehensive analysis of available options for improving general education bus services, including an implementation timeline which is consistent with relevant SC policies and prevailing contractual provisions.	<b>School Assignment Policy Analysis</b> Conduct a comprehensive analysis of current school demographics and the impact that neighborhood school assignment would have on racial, gender and socioeconomic balance within schools and its implications for funding.	<b>Lowell Student Advisory Council</b> Establish a student advisory council to elevate student voices in district-level decision-making; Implement training for all student members and coordinate monthly meetings related to district-level initiatives

This past year was an unprecedented year of significant change due to the ongoing health crisis, but together we were able to *meet or exceed every goal and target we established at the beginning of the year*

# STANDARD 1

## Instructional Leadership

### Key Highlights

- Designed and implemented local, community-vetted and flexible plans to safely re-open school based on all prevailing state and national COVID-19 requirements that resulted in one of the largest full-time, in-person enrollments in the Commonwealth in September with 3,000 students in classrooms across the district in the fall, effective shifts between in-person and remote environments in response to health data in the winter, and a significant expansion of in-person learning to over 7000 students in classrooms full-time in the spring
- Increased the districtwide high school graduation rate from 78% to 80.9% from 2019 to 2020, marking the highest overall 4-year cohort graduation rate since 2017
- Narrowed the opportunity gaps among multiple student demographic subgroups based on graduation data released in 2021 with a 14.3% increase in the graduation rate of Hispanic students, a 5.6% increase among African American students, a 7.5% increase among English Learners, a 4.1% increase among economically disadvantaged students, and a 11.9% increase among students with disabilities from 2019 to 2020

# STANDARD 1

## Instructional Leadership

### Key Highlights

- Maintained the district's focus on early learning with continuous offerings of both in-person and remote options for pre-K students throughout the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, maintaining enrollment of 453 students in 2020-2021 and remaining on track with long-term plans for universal preK with an expansion of 55 early learning seats to start the 2021-2022 school year
- Improved the districtwide average daily attendance rate from 92% in the first quarter of 2020-2021 to 94% in the third quarter, nearly matching the pre-COVID shutdown estimate of 95% from the third quarter of 2019-2020
- Implemented the District's first ever standardized social-emotional learning assessment to monitor SEL needs and target supports among all students, reducing the percentage of students identified in the highest tier of required support from 17% in the fall of 2020 to 14% in the spring of 2021
- Increased the number of students participating in the district's K-12 summer program from 1500 in the summer of 2019 to over 3000 in the summer of 2020
- Increased enrollment in the District's Early College partnership program with Middlesex Community College by more than 500% with 863 more students enrolled in one or more courses that are eligible for college credits in 2020-2021 compared to the prior year (*Lowell Early College*)
- Redesigned the districtwide middle level band program to increase access to the arts and increase alignment between middle and high school programming (*Afternoon in the Arts*)

# STANDARD 1

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## Instructional Leadership

### Opportunities for SY2021/2022

- COVID-Related Learning Loss
- Opportunity Gaps Among Diverse Populations

# STANDARD 2

## — Management and Operations

### Key Highlights

- Developed multiple, scenario-based budget plans for FY21 to account for the variability in statewide economic forecasts following the COVID-19 shutdown, resulting in stabilized school budgets to open school in September, a balanced Districtwide budget immediately upon receiving final state revenue figures in October, and a re-investment of approximately \$10 million of cost savings in strategic initiatives in the spring, including facility upgrades, technology enhancements and additional professional learning for instructional staff across the District
- Implemented phase 2 of the newly-overhauled school budgeting process, increasing the total direct allocation to schools from \$1.8 million in FY19 to \$148.6 million in FY22 and increasing the level of site-based flexibility in spending from 1% to 69% over the same time span (*Fair Student Funding*)
- Improved overall staff recruitment and districtwide hiring practices through a concerted effort to identify and eliminate race-based employment barriers, increasing the percentage of teachers who identify as people of color from 6.8% in 2019 to 10% in 2021
- Improved the safety and emergency preparedness of each facility through an internally-developed district-wide school safety audit protocol, resulting in an average school safety rating of *meets expectations* for the 2020-2021 school year



# STANDARD 2

## — Management and Operations

### Key Highlights

- Implemented the District's first comprehensive Digital Learning Plan, increasing the ratio of mobile devices to students from 1:3 in SY19/20 to 1:1 for the start of SY20/21, distributing nearly 13,000 mobile devices to students and families across the district to facilitate both remote and in-person learning
- Received more than \$2,500,000 in new money from successful bids for local, state and regional grants in FY21
- Negotiated improved agreements with facility and transportation vendors, resulting in more than \$500,000 in savings to the FY22 budget compared to prior forecasts, enabling greater investments in the classroom
- Expanded and improved the grab and go meal service delivery system, resulting in over 1,000,000 meals served to students and families through the remote learning environment in 2021-2022
- Launched a first-of-its-kind technology support system for the district utilizing outdoor tents and drive-up stations at selected locations across the District to support students and families with in-person technology trouble shooting and hardware repairs during MA's COVID-related shutdown of indoor gathering spaces, resolving more than 10,000 work orders during SY2020-2021

# STANDARD 2

## — Management and Operations

### Opportunities for SY2021/2022

- Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund
- Diversity Recruitment and Hiring

# STANDARD 3

## Family and Community Engagement

### Key Highlights

- Launched the District's first community-wide electronic newsletter to connect families across the District and inform families of pertinent information while celebrating school benchmarks and student and staff accomplishments (*LPS Connector Newsletter*)
- Increased access to district information for families and community partners across the city through an expanded social media presence, increasing the frequency of new posts to the district's accounts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter from less than 10 per month to more than 100 per month and increasing the number of total followers across platforms by 69% from SY18/19 to SY20/21
- Launched the District's first community satisfaction survey with more than 3700 responses to the first survey administration and more than 82% of families reporting overall satisfaction with the District's communications and family outreach processes
- Implemented a pilot family literacy initiative at two schools with 87 parents participating in SY2020-2021 and designed plans for scaling up the initiative to a districtwide rollout in 2021-2022 with centrally-coordinated evening courses, workshops and learning events for parents, guardians and family members at all schools across the District (*Lowell Parent Leadership Institute*)

# STANDARD 3

## Family and Community Engagement

### Key Highlights

- Expanded parental involvement in school-based budgeting with more families than ever before participating in the spring budget process through active school-site councils at every school in the District for the first time in recent history
- Improved the accessibility of parental choice through the launch of an online registration process, enabling parents to participate in the district's school choice and lottery system remotely during MA's COVID-related stay-at-home orders
- Increased parental involvement through 18 virtual forums from August to May, engaging more than 2700 parents and guardians in district-level discussions, ranging from school opening plans to safety protocols to grant applications to culturally and linguistically sustaining practices
- Elevated student voice by establishing the district's first Student Advisory Council with representation from a diverse, cross-section of secondary students to inform district-level decision-making (*Lowell Student Advisory Council/LSAC*)

# STANDARD 3

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## Family and Community Engagement

### Opportunities for SY2021/2022

- Language Access
- Student Voice

# STANDARD 4

## Professional Culture

### Key Highlights

- Increased collaboration with staff across the District through 18 virtual staff forums from August to May, engaging more than 1800 staff members in district-level discussions, ranging from school opening plans to safety protocols to grant applications to culturally and linguistically sustaining practices
- Negotiated one of the earliest Memorandums of Agreement for in-person learning among urban districts in the Commonwealth, establishing a collaborative agreement for on campus, COVID-related working conditions with both the United Teachers of Lowell and the Lowell School Administrators Association in September
- Designed and implemented a locally-based, teacher recruitment and retention program to increase the number of teachers of color in district schools through a first-of-its-kind partnership with UMASS Lowell, increasing support and professional growth opportunities for current LPS teachers of color (*Diversifying Teacher Leaders Initiative*)
- Designed and implemented the district's first systemic approach to turning around chronically underperforming schools through a model of targeted, on-site support and progress monitoring, including an asset-based collaborative observation and feedback protocol following an instructional rounds model (*Renaissance Network*)

# STANDARD 4

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## Professional Culture

### Key Highlights

- Developed and implemented the District's first ever anti-racism reporting protocol with defined operating procedures for investigating bias-based conduct, monitoring related improvement efforts and implementing targeted interventions to ensure safe and welcoming environments for all students, staff and families at all LPS school and non-school sites
- Developed the District's first comprehensive plan to embed Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices in all schools through a collaborative and strategic, research-based design process that included a diverse representation of staff members, including teachers, administrators and support staff
- Implemented an employee commendation program to formally recognize staff members across the District whose contributions exceeded the standards outlined within their respective job descriptions with more than 60 professional commendations issued to LPS staff since the program's inception (*Superintendent's Commendation Initiative*)

# STANDARD 4

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## Professional Culture

### Opportunities for SY2021/2022

- Collective Bargaining
- Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices



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Overall, we met or exceeded every goal and target we established at the beginning of the year. However, despite the extraordinary organizational progress that we have made so far, we still have a long way to go. The full effects of the disruption to learning that our students and families experienced this past year cannot yet be fully quantified, and those gaps in learning come on top of the opportunity gaps that our racially, linguistically and economically diverse populations have historically experienced. **As we move forward into 2021-2022, we must proceed with the sense of urgency that our families expect and deserve.**